

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2107

April 28, 2004

Mr. Robert V. Varney
Administrator
US Environmental Protection Agency, Region 1
1 Congress St.
Boston, MA 02114-2023

Dear Administrator Varney:

I am writing to request further information about lead levels in the Boston area drinking water.

The Washington Post reported today that concentrations of lead in Boston area drinking water exceed the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) national standard of 15 parts per billion (ppb). Exposure to lead can lead to delays in physical and mental development in babies and children and to increased blood pressure and kidney problems in adults. It is my understanding that the EPA estimates that drinking water can make up to 20% of a person's total exposure to lead, so it is imperative to provide safe drinking water to consumers. Since 1992, Boston area drinking water has seen significant reductions in lead, and it is essential that we continue this progress so that Boston water can consistently meet national standards.

In order to better understand the Boston area lead problem, and its impact upon my constituents, I request your assistance in providing prompt responses to the following questions:

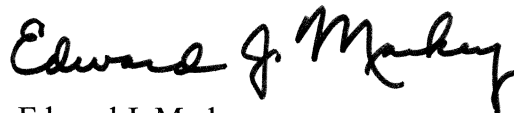
1. According to the Washington Post article, the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) asked the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the EPA to consider invalidating 18 household tests. When did the MWRA request that the EPA and DEP review these tests? What were the lead concentrations in the 18 households that MWRA asked to invalidate? Which communities did these tests come from? What were the reasons given for the invalidation requests for each of these tests? Under the Safe Drinking Water Act, when can a test result legally be invalidated?
2. Have there been any further residential lead tests since MWRA asked EPA and DEP to examine these 18 tests? If so, what were the results of those tests? If not, when are the next tests scheduled?
3. The article indicates that the samples with high lead levels were concentrated in 10 suburban communities. Please identify these 10 communities. What is the total number of tests conducted in each of these communities? The article also indicates that EPA will

have to verify the tests for each community. When will this verification be complete?
Will the EPA be verifying the results for communities other than these 10 communities?

4. The article claims that Boston has replaced two-thirds of its lead service lines. How many households are still serviced by lead service lines? Are there on-going plans to replace these lead service lines? If so, what are they? If not, why not?
5. The article also claims that suburban Boston communities may not have replaced as many lead service lines. What percentage of homes have lead service lines in the 28 communities that MWRA oversees? Are there ongoing plans to replace lead service lines? If so, what are they? If not, why not?
6. Other than in homes, where else in the lead levels in water checked? How often are these checks made? What are the lead levels in the water at these other testing points?
7. What steps are being undertaken by the U.S. EPA, state environmental regulators, and the MWRA to inform those living in areas that may be affected by lead contamination in their water about the possibility of such contamination, provide for free testing of drinking water, educate the public about measures that can be taken to protect against further exposures, and provide access to filtration devices?

Thank you for your cooperation and assistance. Should you have any questions please contact me or have your staff contact Dr. Ana Unruh on my staff.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
Member of Congress

Cc:

Mr. Frederick A. Laskey
Executive Director
Massachusetts Water Resources Authority
100 First Avenue, Charlestown Navy Yard
Boston, Massachusetts 02129

Mr. Robert W. Gollidge Jr.
Commissioner
Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
One Winter Street
Boston, MA 02108